

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 494

EA 021 129

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TITLE Public School Superintendents in Western Pennsylvania: An Assessment of Conflict and Coping.
PUB DATE May 89
NOTE 57p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Educational Research Association (Philadelphia, PA, May 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; Administrator Education; *Boards of Education; *Conflict; *Coping; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Leadership; Management Development; Occupational Information; Politics of Education; *Public Schools; *Superintendents
IDENTIFIERS *Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study designed to investigate the perceptions of conflict and coping by superintendents in Western Pennsylvania. Twenty-eight superintendents (13 former superintendents and 15 currently active superintendents) were interviewed. Triangulation was utilized to determine the credibility of the interview data. Common themes of coping and conflict were found in the references of superintendents to their personal characteristics, ethics, and needs, as well as to their career plans. The superintendents confirmed the variables of the existent political frameworks as compelling conflictors. Political frameworks posed four community types, four related board types, and four role types. Superintendents' comments indicated strong relationships between personal qualities and career plans on most of the conflict and coping dimensions. Appended is an interview protocol guide. (46 references) (SI)

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Public School Superintendents in Western Pennsylvania:
An Assessment of Conflict and Coping

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Public School Superintendents in Western Pennsylvania:
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ABSTRACT

This study of conflict and coping in the superintendency in Western Pennsylvania disclosed a number of findings related to methodology, the conceptual frameworks for the study of conflict and coping in the superintendency, and the relationships between conflict and coping for superintendents in Western Pennsylvania. This study has implications for further research as well as for the training of administrators and policy issues in the state and local educational arenas.

Public School Superintendents in Western Pennsylvania:
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Statement of the Problem

Pre-service and practicing administrators face increasing demands on their time. Long hours at work, graduate courses to earn an advanced degree or additional certification, family responsibilities and personal commitments compete for attention and effort. School leaders, principals and superintendents are most likely to feel the conflict of competing demands since schools are virtual "'hotbed[s]' of stress" (Williamson & Campbell, 1987, 109).

Increased attention to the "productivity" of the schools and the fluctuation of economic factors cause conflicts to arise beyond those normally associated with school administrators. "Not uncommon to people-related professions, the phenomenon of stress and burnout represents yet another symptom that is manifest in a system subject to a great deal of public scrutiny and criticism (Lam 1984, 46)."

What does this mean for the school superintendency?

Over the past ten years, many superintendents of schools in America have had to occupy themselves with planning for school closings because of the drop in the birth rate. With a focus on school closings, reductions in force and related matters, it is easy for the superintendent of schools to lose sight of the major responsibility of the position - the education of youth.... The burden to bring about school improvement falls heavily on the shoulders of superintendents of schools across America. If school districts are to respond effectively to the mandate to improve the effectiveness of American schools, then superintendents of schools must provide vigorous leadership. (Wallace 1985, 17, 22.)

Although this quote from Dr. Richard Wallace of the Pittsburgh Public Schools was intended to describe the national condition of the superintendency, it might, quite naturally, reflect the state of the superintendency in Western Pennsylvania. This research project was designed to identify the sources of conflicts and resources for superintendents in Western Pennsylvania. Specifically, the research study addressed three broad questions:

- [1] What sources of conflict lead to the high turnover in the Western Pennsylvania region?
- [2] Can existing typologies of conflict and coping explain the sources and resources of conflict and coping for the superintendents in Western Pennsylvania?
- [3] What coping mechanisms and support systems sustain the superintendent during crises?

Background of the Study

The Western Pennsylvania region encompasses nine counties with the city of Pittsburgh as the metropolitan center of a population of over two million. Two hundred fifty public school districts, 16% of these urban, serve these communities. The major employment is in service sector and professional occupations. Ten years ago this nine county area represented a population of over three million, and the economy was driven by industry and heavy manufacturing. The decline in the workforce has been 21 percent in relation to 6.4 percent nationally. (Hodgkinson 1988).

Currently there is a lack of movement in or out of the state. The population is aging with one of the lowest birthrates in the U.S. (Hodgkinson 1988). The area is predominantly Christian, 50% Protestant and 30% Catholic.

These sweeping changes in the economics and demographics of the region have been the catalysts for a variety of potential conflicts for schooling in Western Pennsylvania. Due to the historical dependence of this region on heavy industry, schools reflect the unionized approach to employee-management relations. In the last sixteen years, there have been 94 teacher strikes, and only 34 districts, or 14%, have never experienced a strike (Dufalla 1987). The combined factors of an increasing interest in and participation by communities in school management and diminishing economic resources now prompts issue-oriented decision making by school board members. Aspiring school board candidates frequently campaign with single-issue platforms such as "no tax increase" or "no school closing" rather than broader educational issues. In addition, a national press for excellence in schooling has provided a strong impetus to the Pennsylvania state legislature and the Pennsylvania Department of Education to increase schooling standards by a proliferation of laws, policies, and regulations.

Data from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, which serves 42 school districts in Allegheny County, indicated a 50% rate of turnover in the superintendency in the last five years. Although a number of these were retirements, the trend towards early retirement may reflect the rising intensity of conflict. However, the Pennsylvania Department of

Education reported a mere 14% rate of withdrawal from the superintendency in 1987-88 (PDE April 1988, 27).

No organized efforts on identifying sources of administrators' stress nor on identifying administrators' support systems exist in Western Pennsylvania and limited efforts exist nationwide. Few organized efforts, to date, have focused on support systems for administrators in the Western Pennsylvania area. Several projects have addressed this concept through specialized activities, for example, the Tri-State Area Study Council and the Principals' Academy. These projects provide some illumination, but little empirical information about crises and coping mechanisms in school administration in the region. Therefore, this research focused on the nature of the superintendency in Western Pennsylvania through an assessment of practicing administrators' sources of conflict and their strategies for coping with conflict.

Conceptual Framework

Perspectives from the Literature on Stress and Conflict

[A]n understanding of stress can be differentially arrived at by reading the various disciplines that have addressed the topic. Ask a physiologist about stress and get a physiological explanation; a sociologist would proffer a sociological response; a psychologist would explain stress psychologically; an organization behavior advocate views stress from that perspective (Feitler & Tokar 1986, 256-7).

For this study, the usefulness of several typologies of conflict or stress in analyzing the conflicts or coping mechanisms of educators was investigated. Literature from organizational studies as well as theory concerning political conflict and superintendent turnover was reviewed.

Typologies of Conflict and Stress in Organizations

Deutsch's (1973) landmark work in synthesizing conflict literature was consulted for a universal categorization of the objective state of affairs as perceived by the conflicting parties (Deutsch, 11). Deutsch's work represents the seminal studies of psychological and organizational conflict.

TABLE A
DEUTSCH TYPOLOGY OF CONFLICTS

	Objective bet/ A&B	Experienced bet/ A&B	contingency	Type of Misperception issues	parties
<u>TYPE</u>					
Veridical	yes	yes	no	no	no
Contingent	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Displaced	yes	yes	no	yes	no
Misattributed	yes	no	no	no	yes
Latent	yes	no	----	---	---
False	no	yes	yes	or yes	or yes

SOURCE: Morton Deutsch. (1973). The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Deutsch lists six types of conflict. Veridical conflict is a true conflict between parties. That is, the conflict exists objectively and is perceived accurately by the parties. A contingent conflict is dependent on circumstances which could easily be rearranged by the conflicting parties, but neither party recognizes the alternate solutions. In a displaced conflict, the parties argue over an expressed or manifest conflict which masks the true or underlying conflict. Misattributed conflict occurs between the wrong parties. Latent conflict represents issues which are not experienced as conflicts because of repression, displacement or ignorance of the issues. False conflict occurs when there is no objective basis for it.

The second typology of conflict or stress used in the study represented work by Y. L. Jack Lam (1984) to address the conceptual gap between the studies of organizational dynamics and occupational stress. Lam's intention in presenting this typology was to map stressors within organizational processes unique to education.

TABLE B
Lam's
TYPOLOGY OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' STRESS

Types of Stress	Sources of Stress		
	Extra-Org. Induced	Intra-Org. Induced	Intrapersonal Induced
Role Based	Control & Direction	Authority Structure	Commitment vs. Satisfaction
Task Based	Resource Adequacy	Maintenance Function	Functional/Role Ambiguity
Boundary-Spanning	Program Demands	Supervision	Personality
Conflict-Mediating	Value Compatibility	Staff	Role

SOURCE: Lam, Y.L.J. (1984). Sources of managerial stress of the public school administrators: A typology. *Education*, 10 (1), 48-52.

Lam expanded the work of McGrath (1976) and Gmelch (1982) to develop the Typology of Sources of School Administrators' Stress. The cells of the typology are derived from four types of stress crossed with three sources of stress. Lam explained that each cell is grounded in organizational theory (Lam 1986, 48).

The first set of cells delineate stressors which are generated externally to the organization. There are external role based stressors which represent the political environment and the pluralistic governing structure of schools. These external role based stressors impact the school administrators's perceived control "over one's destiny." The external task based stressors govern the conflicts which

represent the external resources at the disposal of the superintendent. **External boundary spanning stressors** are found in the number and intensity of the liaisons with various interest groups the superintendent must face. **External conflict mediating stressors** are indicative of the competing community and social values which school administrators are expected to ameliorate in determining the goals of the school system.

The second set of cells in Lam's Typology illustrate the conflicts found within an organization. **Internal role based stressors** are found in the internal demands for accountability of the superintendent from subordinate administrators, teachers and other staff. **Internal task based stressors** are management related conflicts which arise from the allocation of organizational resources. **Internal boundary spanning stressors** are issues which arise from the quality of communication within the organization. The degree to which the superintendent is able to manage competing interests of all student and staff personnel is the next cell, **internal conflict mediating stressors**.

The final set of cells in the typology describe the stressors which are part of an administrator's personal composition and that affect his/her coping responses. The **intrapersonal role based stressors** primarily focus on the satisfaction and commitment one experiences with his/her life's work. **Intrapersonal task based stressors** are most often found in organizational information discrepancies and required job performance specifications. Personality factors which impinge on an individual's choices to relate to or to withdraw from social contacts are found in the cell of **intrapersonal**

boundary spanning stressors. Values, work place, and personal life demands are related to the cell of intrapersonal conflict mediating.

The third typology used to analyze the respondent's identification of educational conflicts was the Occupational Stress Evaluation Grid, OSEG, (Murphy & Shoenburg 1987). The grid is based upon numerous studies in industry and business on the relationship between stress and work performance and is an example of the growing interest from the business community in improving employee productivity and at the same time fostering job satisfaction and tolerable stress levels.

TABLE C
THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS EVALUATION GRID
(OSEG)

Levels	Stressors	Interventions	
		Formal	Informal
Sociocultural	Racism, Sexism Ecological shifts Economic downturns Political changes Military crises	Elections Lobbying/ political action Public education Trade associations	Grass roots organizing Petitions Demonstrations Migration Spouse employment
Organizational	Hiring policies Plant closings Layoffs, Relocation Automation, Market shifts, Retraining Organizational priorities	Corporate decision Reorganization New management model Management consultant inservice/retraining	Social activities Contests, Incentives Manager involvement & ties with workers Continuing education Moonlighting
Work Setting	Task (time, speed, autonomy, creativity) Supervision Co-workers Ergonomics Participation in decision making	Supervisor meetings Health/safety meetings Union grievances Employee involvement Quality circles Job redesign Inservice training	Slow down/speed up Redefine tasks Support of other workers Sabotage, theft Quit, change jobs
Interpersonal	Divorce, Separation marital discord Conflict, family/friend Death, illness in family Intergenerational conflict Legal/financial difficulties Early parenthood	Legal/financial services Leave of absence Counseling, Psychotherapy Insurance plans Family therapy Loans/credit unions Day care	Seek social support/advice Seek legal/financial assistance Self-help groups Vacation/sick days Child care
Psychological	Neurosis, Mental illness Disturbance of affect cognition, or behavior Ineffective coping skills Poor self-image Poor communication Addictive behavior	Employee assistance (referral in house) Counseling, Psychotherapy Medication Supervisory training Stress Management Workshop	Seek support from family, friends, church Self-help groups/books Self-medication Recreation, leisure Sexual activity Mental health days
Biological	Disease, Disability Sleep, Appetite disturbance Chemical dependency Biochemical imbalance Pregnancy	Preplacement screening Counseling Medical treatment Health education Employee assistance Maternity leave	Change sleep/wake habits Bag lunch Self-medication Cosmetics Diets, exercise Consult physician
Physical/Environmental	Poor air, climate Noise exposure Toxic substance exposure Poor lighting Radiation exposure Poor equipment design Bad architecture	Protective clothing equipment Climate control Health/safety committee Interior decoration Muzak Union grievance	Own equipment, decoration Walkman, radio Consult personal physician Letters of complaint

The Occupational Stress Evaluation Grid was developed to assess occupational stress in work settings arising from tension between the needs of the organization and those of the individual within the organization. This tension is described as person-environment fit, a description found in the literature on stress (French, Rogers & Cobb, 1974; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn & Snoek, 1964; Harrison, 1978). The OSEG fosters a hierarchical view of the conflicts between the individual and the organization, from the physical level to the sociocultural level and also delineates formal from informal interventions. The grid categorizes the amount of personal versus organizational control reflected in the reactions to stress at each level of the hierarchy. In so doing, the OSEG acknowledges the importance of providing appropriate support to people based on the identified stressors and prescribed appropriate interventions. The OSEG places particular emphasis on the need to reduce conflict or stress by increasing the match between the person and his/her environment.

The three typologies (Deustch, Lam, OSEG) represented slightly different perspectives on the analysis of organizational issues. Deustch's typology represented classical and academic theory concerning conflict. Lam's typology represented an educational perspective on the stresses our population/sample was likely to identify. The OSEG represented the important view that certain stresses and conflicts between the individual and the organization require appropriate interventions.

Political Frameworks of Stress & Conflict

The origin of much of that which is stressful or discordant for superintendents is often described as political. Spring (1988) in citing the work of House (1974) noted that superintendents may relate to political concerns at the local level in one of two ways, either as a place-oriented superintendent or as a career-oriented superintendent. Place-oriented superintendents plan to stay with a particular district for an extended period of time and seek to maintain school board support through maintaining support of the local power structure. Career-oriented superintendents build their reputations by producing innovations in school systems which receive national attention. Career-oriented superintendents require the support of the local power structure, but he/she will pursue school systems which offer more prestige and/or money (Spring, 7-8). The professional orientation of superintendents only partially acknowledges the variables affecting superintendent turnover. External political variables have been traditionally accepted in the literature as determinants of turnover.

Two major sources for political frameworks on stress and conflict in the superintendency were consulted for this study. Work by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) focused on political forces present in communities which affected the work and tenure of superintendents. McCarty and Ramsey (1971) were consulted for other sources of power and conflict related to the superintendency. The work of these researchers represents the foundation for much of the literature and research on politics, conflict, and the superintendency.

Iannaccone's and Lutz's (1970) model, also known as the Dissatisfaction Theory of politics and the superintendency identified a variety of variables which have predicted superintendent turnover. The most telling indicator of superintendent turnover found in their studies was defeat of incumbent board members. In the Iannaccone and Lutz model the school district is seen as a social system, with the school board as an important central subsystem. When the school district is relatively open, and the school board relatively closed, then the school district will change its ideology and values about education while the school board's ideology and values remain relatively constant. This leads to greater differences between the community and its elected board members. Thus those board members, who are seen as out of step with the community, are ousted in the next election (Iannaccone & Lutz, 216-217). The change in the school board composition has a direct effect on the tenure of the superintendent and usually results in turnover within three years of the change in board membership (Iannaccone & Lutz, 97-98).

McCarty and Ramsey developed analytical models for classifying communities and the relationships with both superintendents and school boards (Spring 1988, 95). These analytical models are illustrated in the following table.

TABLE D
MCCARTY'S & RAMSEY'S ANALYTICAL MODELS

<u>Community Power Structure</u>	<u>School Board</u>	<u>Role of the Superintendent</u>
Dominated	Dominated	Functionary
Factional	Factional	Political Strategist
Pluralistic	Status Congruent	Professional Advisor
Inert	Sanctioning	Decision Maker

SOURCE: McCarty, D.J. & Ramsey, C. (1971) The School Managers: Power and Conflict in American Public Education. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 22.

The research conducted by McCarty and Ramsey involved fifty communities in a test of their models. Interviews were conducted with key personnel to validate their theory. The communities fell into types which reflected the types of school boards and demonstrated the superintendents' roles. There were four community types:

- Dominated - The power structure was pyramidal with a few people or one person at the top.
- Factional - Communities in which at least two durable factions competed for control over important decisions.
- Pluralistic - These communities had a diffuse power base with many potential poles of power.
- Inert - Use of power in these communities was latent, represented by a domination of the status quo (McCarty & Ramsey 1971, 17-18).

The related board types included;

- Dominated - Members came from the dominating power in the community.
- Factional - Board members represented the view points of the factions of the community, resulting in block votes and frequent split decisions.
- Status Congruent - Board members represented particular interests of the community, making thorough discussion of

issues a focus of the school board.
Sanctioning - The board was particularly inactive. (McCarty & Ramsey, 18-19).

The resulting superintendent behaviors included these role types;

- Functionary** - The superintendent tried to identify with the dominant group and took cues for actions from them.
- Political Strategist** - The Superintendent tried to figure out the "splits" on important votes and tried to remain allied with the "winning" group.
- Professional Advisor** - The superintendent achieved a statesman-like position, not making policy, nor being limited to merely carrying out policy, a "textbook" superintendent.
- Decision Maker** - In this role the superintendent did not take cues from any dominant group nor did he give technical advice to the board, instead the superintendent made policy decisions and then implemented them. (McCarty & Ramsey, 20-22).

Both the work of Iannaccone and Lutz (1970), and of McCarty and Ramsey (1971) resulted in political models of conflict in school governance which employed perspectives and research methods which are multivariate in the analysis of the stresses on superintendents and their school systems. The two models allowed researchers broader viewpoints with which to focus on the context of administration rather than on the particular individuals or single influences on local educational policy.

All of the models reviewed thus far, whether organizational or political, center on the pathology of stress, the conflict. Even as the developers of these models laud the usefulness of conflict in both personal and organizational growth, no clear recommendations on turning conflict into growth can be identified through the organizational and political models of conflict. The researchers turned elsewhere to find a framework for "coping."

Resources and Supports for Administrators' Stress and Conflict

The "coping" literature is not as rich in the areas of educational and organizational research as it is for studies of individuals and their personal development. The personal and social support literature is just dawning in a variety of fields. As a result, this literature is not well linked to the literature on conflict.

The emerging research shows that social networks are a powerful support system and that there is consensus that social support systems alleviate physical and psychological effects of stress (Pearson, 1987). Support networks can have significant impact on work satisfaction and stress on the job (Maynard, 1986, 9; Rudd & McKenry, 1986, 370).

Recent work in psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science and counseling have focused on social support networks (McIntyre, 1986, 421). These studies have been designed to assist mental health and other professionals in understanding how to foster and augment natural helping environments (Maynard, 1986, 9). The definitions of personal and social support networks are myriad, but converge on several points. Social support networks are composed of individuals who care for each other and provide mutual aid which takes many forms, e.g. physical, emotional and informational (Pearson, 1986, 390). Personal support systems include family members. In addition, friends, colleagues, mentors, and fellow professionals combine to form a social support system for the individual. Teaching individuals to identify, establish and to use social supports and networks of helpful

people increases the ability to cope with stress (Pearson, 1986, 394).

Are school administrators likely to use personal and social support systems to deal with work-related stress? Little work has been done in analyzing the support networks of school administrators. Black and English (1986) provided descriptive accounts about "survival techniques" for superintendents, but no formal research results. They referred to the "private supports" of family and close friends as one essential ingredient for success (Black & English 1986, 279).

One study of administrators found the culture of fellow principals to be both clan-like and isolated (Teran & Licata, 1986, 428, 430), a contradiction which merits further investigation. A study of the coping patterns used by exemplary principals indicated that they are more likely to use avocational/recreational and management skill approaches as coping strategies rather than biological interventions such as diet and medical treatment or personal and social support groups (Feitler & Tokar 1986), and that coping strategies employed by administrators seem to be accidentally acquired rather than used as a result of training (Bailey, Fillos & Kelly 1987, 81).

The literature does describe teacher networks (Armour, 1985; Raiser, 1987). The teacher literature reported the importance of decreasing teacher stress and isolation through the use of networks.

Other popular literature urges formation of professional networks as a method of success (Rose 1985, 543), but there are few studies linking networks to the success of school administrators (Teran & Licata 1986, 420). Also, review of the studies investigating the importance of professional networks is inconclusive (Rose 1985, 536).

The analysis of support networks can be useful as a planning tool for identifying needs and resources (Pearson, 392). Analysis of stressors may show a relation to appropriate support resources, although very little research has been performed in linking networks and stress analysis (Pearson, 394). Furthermore, there is not much research which combines frameworks of conflict and coping strategies of school administrators even though this has been a popular topic in the literature for the past decade, e.g. Blumburg & Blumberg (1985), Boyer (1985), Cuban (1986), Executive Educator (1985).

In Western Pennsylvania, no formal database exists concerning either stress factors or coping mechanisms for superintendents and principals. Professional meetings and conferences are rife with conversation and "war stories" about these stressors and supports. The sources for data inquiry in this subject are rich and untapped both regionally and nationally.

The lack of knowledge concerning the relationship between personal and social support networks and conflicts and stressors foreshadows a potentially threatening gap in the design of programs for educational administrators. Research on the presence and importance of support networks in the "lonely" positions of school leadership is sorely needed.

Methodology

Purpose and Design of the Study

This study was an investigation of the perceptions of conflict and coping by superintendents in Western Pennsylvania. The purpose of the study was to gain an overall understanding of the nature of conflict and coping in the superintendency and to determine local meanings of turnover, conflict and coping. The research focused on three broad areas:

- [1] External and internal sources of conflict in the superintendency which lead to turnover;
- [2] The relationship between existing typologies of conflict and coping and the experiences of conflict and coping of the superintendents of Western Pennsylvania;
- [3] Coping mechanisms and support systems used by superintendents during crises.

The sensitive nature of the study influenced the methods used to collect data as well as the length of time required to carry out the study. Results from a preliminary study conducted by the researchers (Lindle & Miller 1988) indicated that some educators were reluctant to admit that they have problems or that they may need the help of others to deal with conflicts and to cope with the stress of the position. Confidentiality was an important issue. Therefore, the researchers used face-to-face interviews to collect much of the data and emphasized the development of trust between the researchers and respondents. Access to raw data from the study was tightly controlled through coding and computer passwords. Participants chose the site of the interviews as well as the date and time.

The preliminary study provided the basis for the selection of

methodology and the choice of interview techniques. The results of this preliminary study gave impetus for a holistic approach to the context of conflict and coping (Everhart 1988).

The researchers also pilot-tested the interview protocol with two former superintendents and two active superintendents. The results of the pilot test validated the choice of methods and focused the areas of inquiry.

The Sample

The researchers identified the sample of former superintendents and current superintendents through analysis of superintendent turnover data from the Western Pennsylvania region. The first phase of the study included thirteen former superintendents from the region who had left the superintendency within the last five years. Seven of the active superintendents who succeeded these former superintendents consented to be interviewed in the second phase of the study. The second phase also included another eight superintendents with three years or less tenure in their school districts. There was a total of 28 participants in this study, 13 former superintendents and 15 currently active superintendents.

The researchers sent letters to the participants describing the research. Included in this letter was an abstract of the study, and a list of possible interview questions. Respondents were contacted by telephone to establish the time, date, and locations of the interviews. Prior to the start of each interview, procedures for maintaining confidentiality were discussed and respondents' questions about the research were answered.

Interview Content

The researchers conducted interviews with all 28 participants. The interviews consisted of 14 areas for documentation with structured probes for all of the interview sessions (See Appendix A). The probes were designed to elicit perceptions about the relative importance of variables from the conceptual frameworks which may not have been identified in the course of discussion by the respondent. Some of the probes encouraged the respondents to elaborate on their responses. The use of probes to re-state the area of discourse increased the length and quality of the responses (Guba & Lincoln 1981, 179).

Table E gives examples of the interview protocol areas for discussion and the relationship of those areas to the conceptual frameworks on conflict, stress and coping. As is evident in the succeeding pages reporting the results, nearly all the variables of these various frameworks emerged with little probing. The complexity of the protocol was validated by the information which was volunteered by the respondents. The multi-dimensionality of conflict and coping are evident in viewing the overlapping perspectives of the frameworks and the protocol in Table E.

TABLE E
 DIMENSIONS OF THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
 AND THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

	<u>Personal/Organizational</u>			<u>Political Models</u>	
	Deutsch	Lam	OSEG	Dissatisfaction	Analytical
1. School district description		X	X	X	X
2. Board turnover	X	X		X	X
3. Superintendent relationship with the school board	X	X		X	X
4. The significance of superintendent turn-over	X	X	X	X	X
5. Perceptions of politics in education	X	X	X	X	X
6. Perceptions of self in the superintendency	X	X			X
7. Education in the future	X	X	X	X	X
8. Personal future	X	X	X		X
9. Retirement plans	X		X		
10. Orientation to education	X	X	X		
11. Coping under stress	X	X	X		X
12. Meaning of success	X	X	X		X
13. Coping with success	X		X		
14. Biographical data	X	X	X	X	

The interviews lasted from one hour to two and half hours and were conducted over a twelve month period. The first phase of the study involved one researcher who tape-recorded answers of the thirteen former superintendents. The answers were then transcribed for future analysis. In the second phase of the study, the interviews were conducted, when possible, with two researchers acting as a team. One of the researchers would take notes while the other maintained the conversation, probed for clarification, and kept the respondents at ease. In cases where scheduling prevented team interviewing, one researcher would conduct the interview while writing keywords. After all sessions, the researchers would debrief by writing up an entire protocol on the session. The research team members would then read each protocol noting which items needed clarification and marking text for triangulation.

Methods of Analysis

Triangulation was chosen as a method to establish the credibility of the interview data (Guba & Lincoln 1981, 106-107). Triangulation was used in this study to validate, corroborate and supplement material from the structured interviews (Erickson 1986).

The pilot interviews supported the use of triangulation in this research study. One of the four pilot respondents suggested that the researchers check through news media accounts to get "some of the flavor and the heat" of the conflicts and coping described during the interviews.

Newspaper reports of school district elections, conflict and other

activities were enhanced by other sources of data for triangulation. Table F illustrates the types of triangulation used on the documentary resources for this study.

TABLE F
TRIANGULATION OF DOCUMENTARY RESOURCES

<u>Type</u>	<u>Resource Triangles</u>			<u>Cases</u>
I	Current Supt.	Former Supt.	State & Local Agencies	9
II	Current Supt.	Former Supt.	News or Public Document	4
III	Former/Current Supt.	Former/Current Supt.	State & Local Agencies	13/15
IV	Superintendent	State & Local Agencies	News or Public Document	28

These triangles provided different perspectives on the same topics or issues. In some sensitive cases, triangulation supplemented the interview protocol. Within the sample of respondents, all protocols were submitted to triangulation methods regarding news reports and state or local data records. Some protocols were triangulated with other protocols through content analysis.

Content analysis was used to review the themes and identify the variables of this research. "Content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti 1969, 14). For this study, the application of Deutsch's, Lam's, and the OSEG typologies and the Dissatisfaction Theory of Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) and McCarty and Ramsey's (1971) Analytic Models was accomplished by content analysis of the superintendents' interviews. In the case of the

current superintendents, the content analysis was validated by asking them for their perceptions of the various variables of the typologies and models. Their perceptions were further validated with conversations with their peers and with a database of newspaper coverage of each district as illustrated in Table F.

The data were sorted and coded by hand. A software package was attempted, but researchers found the computer assistance devoid of the intimacy necessary to explore and synthesize the themes of this research. The constraints of computer assisted analysis of qualitative data is a finding emerging from the work of other researchers as well (Erickson, 149).

Limitations

The limitations of the study reside in the external validity and generalizability of the results to a broader population than the region where this study was based. The internal validity of the study was the primary focus of the researchers in choosing the methods of research (Campbell & Stanley 1963, 5-6). The data triangles selected were not exhaustive of the possible triangulation methods, thus, the selected triangles were a resource limitation of this study. Other triangles might expose other relations in the data not revealed in this particular analysis (Eichelberger 1989, 157). The methods used are replicable (McMillan & Schumacher 1984, 30-31); therefore, applicability is testable beyond the region of Western Pennsylvania.

Results

Demographics

As a group the former superintendents were slightly older than the current superintendents. All of the superintendents were licensed by the state, but only half of the former superintendents had completed doctoral study in education as compared to all but one of the current superintendents. Both groups of superintendents were under-representative of minorities and women, which is typical of the population of superintendents in this region of the state. The white male respondents were 50% Protestant and 50% Catholic in both of the groups which is slightly over-representative of the Catholic population of this area.

Conflict Typologies

The analysis of this data confirmed the findings of the preliminary study to this project (Lindle & Miller 1988). The organizational typologies of conflict were not adequate to describe the components of conflictual experiences related by any of the superintendents. The Deutsch (1971) Model was not multi-dimensional enough to classify any of the superintendents' experiences. The OSEG typology also was found to be too limited to describe the experiences of the administrators' in this study since their conflict stories fit no particular level of conflict and, in most cases, ran the entire OSEG hierarchy from the biological level up to the sociocultural. Neither the OSEG nor the Deutsch models are designed to categorize the unique relationship between the public and any individual in schools, much less the board and superintendent relationship. Lam's typology, which

is school-based, described more of the administrative concerns of the superintendents of this study; however, instructional relationships of concern to superintendents did not fit into Lam's categories. For example, a star football player who is disciplined for grades raises issues which represent competing program demands as well as value compatibility and questions about authority and structure. Thus Lam's typology, while more descriptive of the types of conflicts facing school administrators, was also too limited in the dimensionality required to define the conflicts. All three organizational typologies were found to be as limited in applicability to this sample of superintendents as all three of the typologies had been found lacking in relation to the preliminary study of educators' conflicts in general (Lindle & Miller 1988).

Political Conflicts and Superintendent Turnover

Dissatisfaction Theory

Eight of the former superintendents and two of the current superintendents described conflict factors which have or will result in leaving their positions. These people indicated the classic Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz 1970) areas of change in social, political and economic conditions which led to change in community values and then to board turnover. The superintendents who fit this model and left their positions indicated these variables as determining factors in their leaving, as this exchange indicated;

Interviewer: In the literature, fiscal, personnel changes and community interest group issues raised the level of concern within a given school district. What was the status of these issues in your

district?

Superintendent: Those issues you outlined are, in all frankness, the least important as far as the successful functioning of the superintendent...

The two current superintendents also indicated these factors as being negative influences on their "success" in their districts and both anticipated that they will leave these districts in the near future.

"There is a sophisticated group in this community, but they don't run for the board...[they] say don't ask me to sit with those people [current board members]. In the 1970's, professionals were on the school board; doctors, lawyers, businessmen. The unionism in the community caused the school board to change. Retrenchment, racial conflict and the economic crisis that followed. Several professionals said that being on the board cost them their business[es]."

Of the remaining superintendents, four former superintendents left their positions without the presence of critical Iannaccone and Lutz factors. These superintendents discussed the factors, but indicated little change or conflict in social, political, economic factors nor in community values. They did indicate an increase in board turnover, but for reasons related to change in state laws on the length of board terms (shortened from six to four years). In addition, these four superintendents and two other former superintendents reported that their personal values had forced them to make a career decision, such as retirement or a move to a better position.

For three of the current superintendents, personal values appeared to allow them to stay in districts where all of the other variables identified by Iannaccone and Lutz would indicate that they would leave. Although the changes in social, economic and political factors have led to shifts in community values and to board turnover, these

superintendents have weathered the turmoil and do not appear to be vulnerable to loss of their position. The key variable in their staying power appeared to be personal values about being responsive to community issues and flexibility in their position. One of these superintendents articulated the delicate balance required of school leaders in this way;

"While I have a vision in mind, I tolerate ambiguity, providing it is headed in a direction. I can re-direct a body that is moving. If I sense a roadblock, I try to find a way around it. I'm very persistent, but I don't force an idea. I let readiness develop."

In the analysis of the study data in relation to the Iannaccone and Lutz model, the critical variable for nine of the 28 superintendents is not among the Dissatisfaction Theory's classic set of variables. The critical variable appeared to be all of the Iannaccone and Lutz variables plus whether the superintendents' values are dissonant with the community or the board. These findings supported recent work by Lutz and Moore (1989).

One emerging trend uncovered by this research in the variables cited for Dissatisfaction Theory must be noted. In the description of changes in community values nearly all 28 superintendents discussed the rise and fall of certain community interest groups. Nearly half of the former superintendents and a third of the current superintendents noted the increasing influence and power of senior citizens groups. Several current superintendents mentioned the diminution of the voice and influence of parents in relation to the rising vociferousness of the aging and their concerns about the fiscal management of schools.

"The surprising thing in a town like XYZ, the only group that is vocal is the senior citizens. There was no younger

group...Any time we had a budget meeting we could be absolutely positive that the only people that would be there would be senior citizens."

Analytical Models

The McCarty and Ramsey (1971) models were useful in determining the presence of conflict in each case. However, the success of the superintendent did not appear to be totally dependent on assuming only one "appropriate" role as indicated in the Analytic Models.

Political Strategist vs. Professional Advisor

The two dominant roles among these respondents emerged as the Professional Advisor and the Political Strategist. Some of the superintendents were able to manage conflict by operating as a political strategist, regardless of the presence or lack of conflict in their district. Superintendents, who were forced to leave (16 of the 28 cases), universally adopted a professional advisor role. McCarty and Ramsey described this as the "textbook superintendent (1971, 143)."

Both the former and current superintendents who assumed the professional advisor role represented a mix of training and advanced degrees. The basis for shouldering the professional advisor role appeared to be part of the perceptions of the position of the superintendency for these particular superintendents.

In contrast, those who assumed the political strategist role primarily were found among the current superintendents. All had doctorates, but several mentioned the lack of an internship, or the distance between their course work and the "real" work of the

superintendent. In light of current efforts to reform educational administration, (e.g. Burdin 1989, Griffiths, Stout & Forsyth 1987, Greenfield 1986, Murphy & Hallinger 1987, or Willower 1988), the perceptions of these respondents are informative.

"Most of the coursework really doesn't describe the job."

"I really don't know how you [would] prepare for this job."

"There were no course in politics of education. There was nothing about the day-to-day issues. None of the courses were really gutsy...You know, I really didn't need a course in financing or accounting, budgeting. I think I'm smart enough, most superintendents are smart enough, to figure that out by just looking over the books. but the stuff I would have liked help on isn't offered...Politics."

The Meaning of Politics

"[The superintendent] should not be a politician. He should be a person who understands human psychology and behavior and knows how to communicate with various publics in the community."

While several of the former and current superintendents mentioned "politics" as a source of conflict, both groups tended to regard politics in terms of political parties. The current superintendents were asked directly to define the role of the superintendent in politics. These superintendents unanimously agreed that superintendents should stay out of the election process when the community selects board members. Yet a few mentioned aspects of the daily interaction between human beings as having political overtones. In the words of one superintendent;

"It's important for the superintendent to try to mold public opinion...and [to] rally support of the business and community leaders...It could be politics, but I think it's

just good PR."

To current and former superintendents, "politics" is a dirty word. It implies smoke-filled rooms and underhanded machinations to get votes for people or political parties. Yet most of the current, and a few of the former, superintendents recognized the importance of community input in the school district's decision making process. Superintendents who assumed the professional advisor role, recognized politics as a source of conflict.

"It's so political here...They're [the board members are] very political."

The political strategists were more likely to describe politics as part of the human interactions necessary to run a school district.

"Politics won't go away. So the best thing to do is to learn how to understand politicians."

The Language of Superintendents

One of the dominant themes in McCarty and Ramsey's work was a phenomena they referred to as the rhetoric of conflict (1971, 101). In this study there was evidence that in the more conflict-ridden districts, the rhetoric was vivid and "street-wise." The female researchers suspected that more evidence of the rhetoric of conflict would have been gathered if there had been no gender differences between the interviewers and the superintendents. The fact that such language emerged at all is testimony to the intensity of the situations for the embroiled superintendents.

"There'd been lots of misunderstanding and that !*!\$#?! called me up — did I shock you?..."

Or witness this exchange;

Interviewer: What do you do to celebrate things that go well?

Superintendent: I have an extra-marital affair each month—
Just kidding!

Another sort of linguistic habit was also documented in the course of this research. Nearly all of the superintendents referred to their positive accomplishments using the pronoun "we" and reserved "I" for the description of negative experiences.

Several indicated they were talking about themselves and the board or the teachers or the administrative team when using "we", but others used "we" in reference to any activity in the district.

"The support for education from the community allows us to do things...that they might not otherwise do. Because we show them how these things are a part of a quality education, we get support for them."

The use of "we" was particularly poignant in situations where the superintendent had left with virtually no support from the board or where the superintendent was facing virtually no support.

"It [the superintendent's relationship with the board] is varied, from close to stand-offish. We've carved out a working relationship with them all. Some of them may not feel as close to me as others, but we have a working relationship."

The use of the word "we" did not appear to be imperial in these discussions. Instead, a personal identification with the district was apparent. One superintendent noted that his reluctance to take another job, even though it was a good career move, was founded solely on his loyalty to the people of the former district.

"I felt such a commitment to those community groups that had worked so hard with me to bring the district about."

In general, the work of McCarty and Ramsey was confirmed by the superintendents of this study. The analytical models were verified by

the former and current superintendents' perceptions of conflict. Yet one persistent gap in both the Dissatisfaction Theory and the analytic models of McCarty and Ramsey appeared in the current research. This gap concerned the power and influence of staff on conflict in the superintendency. Labor relations can be important, but it was the culture of the administrative team and the informal powers of the teachers that generated conflict in many of the cases in this study. Some of the superintendents mentioned how they wished they could have chosen new administrative staff, but felt "stuck" with what was there.

"Sometimes I feel I'm in a tennis match with the board and the administrative staff, between the ambitions and the smugness."

"[The district] lost all of their best administrators and unfortunately that's what happens to you..."

So another set of independent variables the current research has identified is the relation of superintendent turnover to staff tenure, including administrative staff and informal teacher leaders could be added to the landmark work done by the political conflict theorists. An area of importance to the work of both Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) and McCarty and Ramsey (1970) which these superintendents supported by their responses was the area of board and superintendent relations as strong variables of conflict.

The Board and Superintendent Relationship

The potency of conflict with the school board and the superintendent was recognized by all of the conflict typologies and the Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz 1971) as well as the models of McCarty and Ramsey (1970). In this study, both groups of

superintendents mentioned this type of conflict frequently, but not as frequently as personal qualities or career issues. Both groups were deeply concerned about the implications of conflict in the superintendent-school board relationship.

"I know another superintendent who just retired. He was really good but the board got to him. He finally said, 'I don't need to go through this.' He had a whole bunch of new board members and the thought of having to educate them just made him tired. So he quit."

"Think about this... when there is a lot of turnover on the board, the superintendent has to educate the new board members. Isn't there something wrong when I have to train my bosses? Doesn't that make for a bad relationship?"

Although McCarty & Ramsey (1971) concluded the report on their work with policy recommendations which might be described as a list of conflict and coping strategies for superintendents, boards, and state agencies, the current research was more revealing about the recommendations superintendents in Western Pennsylvania made in the assessment of conflict and coping strategies.

Assessment of Conflict in Western Pennsylvania

In Western Pennsylvania, although the former and current superintendent were asked about their perceptions of the components of several models of conflict, their responses clustered in areas which were not represented by the models. Table G lists the conflicts identified by both groups of superintendents. While board relations were strong referents of conflict for these superintendents, career issues and personal qualities were more dominant in their remarks.

TABLE G
CONFLICT THEMES IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

<u>Conflict Themes</u>	<u>Former</u> <u>Superintendents</u> n=13	<u>Current</u> <u>Superintendents</u> n=15
Career Issues	11 85%	13 87%
Personal Qualities	10 77%	14 93%
Board Relations	10 77%	12 75%
Human Relations	9 69%	8 53%
Professional Skills	9 69%	8 53%
Politics	4 31%	6 40%
External Factors	5 38%	1 7%

Personal Qualities

An important distinction between the current and former superintendents occurred regarding their concerns about Personal Qualities. The comments in these categories referred to personal standards regarding ethics and the performance of their work as well as managing intrapersonal conflict, maintaining health in the face of stress and personal needs. The current superintendents were more concerned about conflict with their personal needs and the needs of the district or board.

"I often feel like the little boy with his finger in the dike. I'm in between the kids and this avalanche of water that's coming at them. It's not paranoia, it's real."

The former superintendents mentioned their own skills in managing disagreements with other groups or individuals more frequently than the current superintendents.

"I wouldn't have had the conflict if I could have installed new lights. I wouldn't have had a visitation of 200 citizens to a board meeting because we cut out night football."

Career Issues

These personal issues were also reflected in the career concerns of the former and current superintendents. Current superintendents were more likely to mention conflicts about their career path which also fell in line with their personal needs.

"The only [career] change, if ever, would be in this area to a bigger district, if I thought I could contribute...I'm tied here."

The former superintendents mentioned personal and career conflicts over the process of evaluation and dismissal as well as concerns about compensation more often than the current superintendents.

"They [the board members] are too businesslike. In all the years I've been here, not one has ever thanked me personally, come over to shake my hand and say, 'Nice job.' There isn't that personal touch...Just once, I would have really appreciated that."

"I think a contract for a superintendent in this state is a dangerous thing because it sets up an artificial end. If I had no contract at all, if superintendents just worked without contracts, but if they wanted to release you, they [would be] required to have a due process hearing. There was no way in a due process hearing, they could have found anything wrong with my management."

Other conflict areas were described in similar terms with similar frequency by both groups of superintendents. One area of exception in conflict due to professional skills must be noted since it may represent changes in the social and political climate of the area. Former superintendents were more concerned about labor relations as a major source of conflict. The current superintendents mentioned labor problems less frequently and they focused on staff problems not related to collective bargaining. These attitudes may reflect the climate of negotiations which has become less confrontational in the last few

years. One of the most recent strikes in the area (January, 1989) was challenged in court and questioned the constitutionality of Act 195, the Pennsylvania legislation allowing labor action by teachers.

In answer to the question of whether there is more or less conflict in the superintendency in this region than previously, the data for this study showed a shift in the origin of conflict. The role of superintendent is still perceived as conflict-laden. The conflicts typical of the late 1970's are not typical of the late 1980's.

"I think a lot has happened in the last 10-15 years to change the nature of the superintendency. You have so many interest groups, school closings, sex education, changes in the curriculum or lack of changes..."

Coping In Western Pennsylvania

Former superintendents were asked to respond to questions concerning their former districts in terms of conflict. Nearly all of them also revealed the strategies and mechanisms they used to cope with the conflict. Most of the strategies they mentioned were related to recognized professional skills of superintendents, yet it must be noted that only three of these former superintendents still hold positions as superintendents elsewhere. The preliminary study conducted by the researchers (Lindle & Miller 1988) revealed that most educators do not volunteer information about coping due to fears of undermining perceptions of their professional competency. Thus, the current superintendents were asked direct questions about how they coped with conflict, stress and the demands of their work. The contrasts in responses between the two groups seen in Table H is striking and at least partially due to the differences in obtaining responses.

TABLE H
COPING THEMES

<u>Coping Themes</u>	<u>Former</u> <u>Superintendents</u> n=13		<u>Current</u> <u>Superintendents</u> n=15	
Professional Skills	11	85%	14	93%
Personal Qualities	8	62%	14	93%
Human Relations	8	62%	12	75%
Career Plans	9	69%	10	66%
Board Relations	7	54%	8	53%
Coping Resources	4	31%	15	100%
Personal Coping Strategies	1	8%	15	100%
External Resources	3	23%	12	75%
Luck [If Wishes were Horses...]	4	31%	1	7%

Although the researchers initially thought that conflict questions would be the most sensitive areas of the interviews, this study indicated that the most sensitive areas of the superintendent's role were his coping strategies. In discussing conflict, the respondents were able to identify and separate the components of the situation and in most cases to depersonalize themselves from the conflict. Preserving a distance between work and home was mentioned by all of the current superintendents. In contrast, descriptions of coping strategies could not be depersonalized and were viewed as idiosyncratic.

Professional Skills as Coping Techniques

Coping mechanisms are the professional secrets of the superintendency. These superintendents' coping strategies appeared to relate directly to turnover, perhaps more so than the particular conflict situation which seemed to precipitate turnover. Superintendents viewed coping as either the reason they were hired or fired.

"[Superintendents] are like baseball managers. If a guy was fired by a school board. I wouldn't necessarily look at it as a failure...maybe the person is in the wrong job [district]."

The Interrelationships of Professional Skills and Personal Qualities

The former superintendents mentioned strategies that revealed their professional skills. The secrets of their strategies for coping were hinted at in references to their personal qualities or career plans. They mentioned coping supports or resources very infrequently. If they mentioned these coping supports, they were more likely to discuss external resources, such as the state or local educational agencies and professional organizations than personal coping resources, such as family, vacations or hobbies.

"I always concentrated on the educational part because I don't think your decisions should ever be, in education, governed by economics."

"I think regardless of what the socio-economic levels of the community are, that as a superintendent of schools you have to be a couple of things, (1) a visible superintendent, a good public relations agent for the school district and (2) honest with the people you're living with and up front with them."

The current superintendents also provided rich responses in describing their professional skills and personal qualities; however, the probes designed for this group of superintendents definitely enhanced the protocols. They gave more emphases to the importance of their training as compared to the former superintendents who did not refer to their training at all.

The current superintendents were more likely to use data to inform or persuade. In addition, the current superintendents were less likely

to mention their skills in curriculum and staff development and labor relations than the former superintendents.

"I want lots of input. I can't work in a vacuum. I give the board lots to read. I make a memo listing items and then attach documents for the listed items...They read the list just to know what is going on."

Personal Qualities and Coping

In describing their personal qualities, both the former and current superintendents focused on particular personality or character traits. Over half the current superintendents, but none of the former superintendents, mentioned persistence as an important personal quality.

"You need to focus on the problem. You need to find the REAL problem...So if you are too afraid to really confront an issue, then you can't ever get out of it. You have to keep coming back to the question: Does it really benefit kids?"

Another dominant personal quality mentioned by both current and former superintendents was the thrill of conflict, or a problem solving personality. Vivid imagery was evident in the answers of several of the current superintendents which may indicate that these people have thought a great deal about their problem solving acumen.

"I am a humming bird. I'm constantly flitting around creating problems, situations, structuring situations. I am a creative problem solver and a creative problem seeker."

"...every other job I've had, I've gotten bored. In this one, sometimes I feel like I'm chasing it. It gets ahead of me, there is so much to do. I really like that."

Although only a brief overview of the variety of the coping responses can be presented here, a summary note on weak coping strategies must be mentioned. Four of the former superintendents and one of the current superintendents indulged in suggestions for

strategies that the researchers chose to categorize as wishful thinking. The reader must note that only a few of the respondents suggested such "magical" strategies. An example of such comments is illustrated by these remarks from a former superintendent;

"The solution [would have been] for the state to come in and give them [the district] the kind of subsidy monies we needed."

Complete analysis of the data revealed a variety of interesting comments on coping and survival in the superintendency. The review presented here represented only some of the common themes among the respondents. Some less common but powerful ideas about survival in the superintendency were also uncovered in the analysis of this data, including marketing of schools or education, development of counseling skills, or visiting classrooms to reduce stress and refocus energy. Presentation of those results must be reserved for future papers.

Conclusions

This study of conflict and coping in the superintendency in Western Pennsylvania disclosed a number of findings related to methodology, the conceptual frameworks for the study of conflict and coping in the superintendency, and the relationships between conflict and coping for superintendents in Western Pennsylvania. This study has implications for further research as well as for the training of administrators and policy issues in the state and local educational arenas.

The research methods chosen were productive for exposing the complexity of relationships of conflict issues and the coping mechanisms for the superintendents of this research. The interview methods were the most holistic technique for the study of the conflict and coping phenomena. Interviews triangulated with each other as well as data resources from state and local agencies and regional newspapers allowed a multiplicity of data with the rich interrelationships necessary for a multivariate analysis of the intricate concepts of conflict and coping in educational administration.

Further investigation of conflict and coping using these methods is needed. Other triangles of data resources require documentation. The triangle from superintendent to board member to state or local agencies would be particularly interesting given some of the state activity in districts in Western Pennsylvania. The triangle from superintendent to professional organization to board member might provide further description of variables of conflict and coping in the

superintendency. The data available from the superintendent to family member to board member triangle might also enhance the work of this study. Given the issues raised in this study about the staff influences as variables of conflict, the triangle from superintendent to subordinate to state or local agency may provide important results. There are more combinations possible which would replicate this study and enhance the meager knowledge base concerning conflict and coping relationships in the superintendency.

Although the conceptual frameworks used in this research were at least partially substantiated by the results. Limitation of these frameworks must be noted. Data from this study over-stretched the dimensionality of the Deutsch (1973), Lam (1984) and OSEG (1987) typologies.

The political frameworks of the Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz 1970) and of McCarty and Ramsey (1971) were confirmed and expanded by the results of this research. The superintendents of this study were particularly verbal about relationships with the school board, and the media database corroborated these relationships as virulent sources of conflict. The researchers found the Iannaccone and Lutz Dissatisfaction Theory was enhanced by the inclusion of the superintendent's values which supported recent work by Lutz and Moore (1989). Both the Dissatisfaction Theory and McCarty's and Ramsey's analytical models were found to be limited in acknowledging the political power and influence of school district staff. Further investigation of the staff influence variable was indicated by the findings of this research.

Common themes of coping and conflict were found in the references of superintendents to their personal characteristics, ethics and needs, as well as to their career plans. The superintendents confirmed the variables of the political frameworks as compelling conflictors, but their comments indicated strong relationships between personal qualities and career plans on most of the conflict and coping dimensions.

The data presented here represents a summary of the analysis. The analysis uncovered numerous potentially powerful variables which will require further description in future reports.

Turning to issues of education and training of superintendents, the researchers had hoped to identify variables which would improve administrator training and narrow the gap between course work and experience. Future reports on the variables identified in this research may better illustrate the potential for improving the training of administrators; however, it is quite clear from this report, that no one variable precipitates dissension. Unfortunately, schools of education are limited in their resources for aiding superintendents or school districts in coping with conflict. That is, a school of education can directly affect only one variable in the conflict situation, the superintendent. This represents a univariate solution to a multivariate problem. Such a solution can have only a temporary outcome. The Iannaccone and Lutz (1971) work shows that the univariate, "fixing the superintendent" is the typical response used by school boards. The first phase of this study also indicated that "fixing" the superintendent is a response that individual

superintendents use in some conflict situations by retiring or taking another position elsewhere. Perhaps what must be explored in future studies, would be a way to "fix" the school board or the school district, rather than the superintendent. The question remains: Is this a reasonable direction for research on conflict and coping in school leadership? Perhaps the work of Boston University in managing the Chelsea, Massachusetts, school system may provide an answer.

Other directions for training were identified by this research. New models of teaching and learning for school executives must be developed in education. Training programs should prepare prospective administrators to respond to the role strain and role ambiguity of the position. An over emphasis on the "B's," (buses, bricks, and bucks) to the detriment of people-oriented skills in preparation programs can create superintendents who are ill-prepared to deal effectively with the conflicts they face. Conflict management and human relations skills are keys to success in dealing with competing demands on the job and in developing coping mechanisms which reduce stress.

Education is human relations intensive. Learning, teaching, and managing schools require extensive human interactions. Extensive human contacts precipitate conflicts and stress. If coping with conflict is to provide growth for the people in schools and who manage schools, then no other focus of research has such high potential for improving schooling than the intensive study of the human relationships evident in managing conflict and coping with stress in schools.

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Appendix A

Interview
Protocol
Guides

Interview Protocol Guides
for
Superintendents in
Western Pennsylvania

Code: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

1. Describe your school district.

- Probe: What are the financial conditions of the S.D.?
- Probe: Describe the community.
- Probe: What are the community values concerning education?
- Probe: Are there particular special interest or well-defined community groups?
- Probe: How does the community, or its groups, affect your work as superintendent?
- Probe: Using these terms, dominated, pluralistic, factional, inert, [see attached sheet to explain if necessary], what type of community do you have?

2. Describe the turn-over in board membership.

- Probe: How often do you get new board members?
- Probe: What is the average tenure of board members?
- Probe: What were the issues in the last board election?
- Probe: On what issues did your newest board member run?

3. Describe your relationship with the school board.

- Probe: What do you perceive the role of the board to be?
- Probe: Do you have a problem with the elected/citizen or civilian (uninformed about education) nature of the board?
- Probe: Using these terms, Dominating, Status Congruent, Factional, Inert, Sanctioning, what type of board do you have?
- Probe: What type of board would make your work easier or more effective?

4. What is the significance of superintendent turn-over?

- Probe: What are the overt, obvious reasons people leave the superintendency?
- Probe: What are the contributing reasons?
- Probe: How did the transition from the former superintendent to your assumption of the superintendency affect your initiation into this district?
- Probe: Did you have a mentor?
- Probe: Do you mentor other people? If so, how do you identify the people you mentor?

5. Define politics in education.
 - Probe: Is there politics in education?
 - Probe: What are the appropriate political aspects of the role of the superintendent?
6. Do you see yourself as a change agent or a stabilizing influence?
 - Probe: What role do you play...Functionary, Political Strategist, Professional Advisor, Decision Maker [use attached sheet to explain as necessary]?
7. Project the type of education you expect to see in this district in the next five years.
 - Probe: Where do you expect the general field of education in this country to be in the next five years?
8. Project where you expect to be in the next five years?
 - Probe: Where do you expect to be in your career?
 - Probe: Where do you expect to be geographically?
9. When would you expect to retire from education?
 - Probe: What conditions would prompt you to retire from education?
10. What attracted you to education?
 - Probe: How does the superintendent position differ from what you expected it to be?
11. When things get tough, how do you cope?
 - Probe: How do you manage stress on the job?
 - Probe: How do you know if your coping strategies are successful?
 - Probe: How do you know if your strategies are not successful?
 - Probe: Who do you turn to for help, counsel or assistance?
12. During your tenure as superintendent have you had times when everything seemed to go your way?
 - Probe: Have you had periods where everything seemed to go wrong?
 - Probe: What conditions contributed to either of these extremes?
 - Probe: Is your administrative training a factor in either of these extremes?
 - Probe: How do you get out of a cycle when things are not going well?
 - Probe: How do you keep your family relations in balance when things do not go right?

13. What do you do to celebrate things that go well?
Probe: Do you take time to have fun?
Probe: Do you include your family in celebrations about your work?
Probe: What is your pattern of taking time away from your job?
14. Biographical information
Date of Birth
Race
Religion
Gender
Educational Background (degrees earned/certification, dates & institution, cumulative grade average, class ranking or GRE/Miller Analogy scores)
Career History (positions, dates, locations)